

# Disability Management Return To Work

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# Improving your Return to Work Program

- Today's leading organizations have expanded their traditional Return to Work programs. They now include the concepts of preventing injuries and disability before they occur and remaining in work after an injury occurs.
- Goal: preventing needless disability, this approach moves beyond the physician-centred approach to a collaborative multi-stakeholder approach which includes both the physical and mental health of the injured employee.
- Lengthy absences are controlled by a quick response that integrates access to medical care, occupational health services, and workplace accommodation for an early, safe, meaningful and sustainable return to work.
- This approach is particularly suited to common disorders, including musculoskeletal strains which represent nearly 60% of all workplace injuries.
- Effective programs are monitored and include a balanced scorecard of leading, intermediate and trailing performance indicators to measure performance. Continuous improvement is a goal.

# A Framework for Success

- Policies** → Worker focussed policies and procedures are clearly understood  
Provides an effective structure for the organization.
- Assigned Responsibility** → Individual has overall responsibility for the process - includes case management and facilitating RTW  
Should have sufficient competency and appropriate training
- Modified Work & Budgetary Issues** → Modified work and funds available to support these roles  
Includes the concept of "Stay at Work"  
Modified work is offered early in the injury process
- Proactive Prevention Strategies** → Regular risk assessment and screening of high risk groups  
To detect injuries before they result in lost time  
Allows employees to remain in work after suffering an injury
- Education and Competencies** → All stakeholders understand their roles to help injured workers  
Training needs analysis should be conducted to identify competency gaps

# Communication

## **Employee**

Early, considerate and ongoing contact with the injured worker to prevent loss of contact is vital.

## **Co-worker Support**

Plays an important role in the RTW process.  
Need to support the worker without disadvantaging co-workers or supervisors, while maintaining privacy.

## **Health Care Providers**

Communication with providers is essential to clarify job demands and work ability and  
Ensures both clinical and occupational objectives are addressed from the outset.

## **OH&S Professionals**

Complex cases may require the assistance of OH&S professionals who can provide ergonomic, job analysis and functional capacity advice and services.